

I have always believed that our nation must honor the commitments and promises made to our veterans. As the number of veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq tax an already strained Veterans Affairs health system, it's more important than ever that Congress focus on providing the best care possible to our veterans.

Key Legislative Accomplishments During the 112th Congress:

- As a long standing member of the Military Construction-Veterans' Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, I oversaw an increase in funding for veterans' health care and other services by \$30 billion (over 70%) since January 2007, including the largest single increase in the history of VA.
- The recently passed spending bill for the remainder of FY 2011 includes funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs at \$56.4 billion, a decrease of \$518 million from the FY 2011 budget request and **\$3.4 billion above the FY 2010 appropriation.**
- Most of the "reduction" in funding comes from accounts where the VA would not be able to use all of the funds provided. No vital services were cut, and Congress actually increased funding for medical programs.

Bills I Cosponsored in the 112th Congress:

- [H.R. 23](#) - Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act - Creates the Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund to pay a monthly benefit of \$1,000 to each individual who served in the Merchant Marines between December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946.
- [H.R.333](#) - Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act - Amends federal military retired pay provisions to permit veterans with a service-connected disability of less than 50% to concurrently receive both retired pay and disability compensation.
- [H.R. 816](#) - Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act - Give Congress sole authority to change enrollment fees in TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Reserve Select, pharmacy co-payments, and retiree and survivor co-payments for inpatient care.
- [H.R. 840](#) - Establishes an Office of the Victims' Advocate in the Department of Defense to give access to counseling services for victims of domestic or family violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the military.
- [H.R. 1203](#) - Federal and Military Retiree Health Care Equity Act - Amends the Internal Revenue Code to permit federal civilian and military retirees to pay Federal Employees Health

Benefits Program and TRICARE supplemental premiums on a pretax basis. The bill also permits a tax deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums or enrollment fees.

- [H.R. 2474](#) - Veterans Educational Equity Act - Permits California veterans to use up to the full \$6,586.54 in VA education benefits to offset tuition and fees, similar to the benefits enjoyed by veterans in other states.
- [H.R. 3403](#) - Supporting Military Families Act - Amends the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to include family members caring for a veteran undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy for a serious injury or illness who was a member of the Armed Forces (or of the National Guard or Reserves) at any time during the five-year period preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes that treatment, recuperation or therapy.
- [H.R. 4045](#) - Veterans Burial Benefits Improvement Act - Increases the burial allowance for burial and funeral expenses for eligible deceased veterans.

Central Coast Veterans Assistance

New VA/DOD Clinic for the Central Coast

Any veteran who has made the trek from our region to the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital can tell you that it's more than just a quick trip to the doctor. The current clinics in Capitola and at the former Fort Ord are simply not capable of meeting all the needs of our veterans and the military.

Additionally, active duty service members and their dependents have also faced a lack of health care options in our region. In light of both of their needs as well as the needs of our veteran community, I have been working with the VA and the Department of Defense to build a joint clinic that provides local, quality care for veterans as well as active duty service members.

When this new state-of-the-art clinic is completed, it will replace the current outpatient clinic on the former Fort Ord and supplement services provided by the current Capitola VA clinic. Furthermore, this new joint VA/DOD clinic will offer expanded services in gastroenterology, mental health, orthopedics and audiology to meet the needs of veterans and active and retired military personnel who live on the Central Coast. This new joint clinic will fulfill the vision of General Bill Gourley, a tireless champion of veterans' issues, who sadly passed away before he could see his vision fulfilled.

Fort Ord Veterans Cemetery

Veterans on the Central Coast have been waiting a long time for a veterans' cemetery to provide a final resting place for all the veterans and their families who live in the region. I have

worked closely with veterans and state and local officials in my district to see this important project realized.

To see how you can be involved with the cemetery, please visit www.ccvcf.com.

Veterans History Project

Recognizing that the oral history of our nation's veterans need to be preserved for future generations, the Library of Congress and the American Folklife Center have initiated the "Veterans History Project" to chronicle the wartime experiences of veterans who served during World Wars I and II, the Korean, Vietnam and Persian Gulf Wars and the current Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. If you or someone you know would like to contribute to the Veterans History Project, please contact my office at 831-429-1976 or go to www.loc.gov/vets.

As our nation's veterans have answered the call to service, there are opportunities for each one of us to give back to our communities. I encourage you to volunteer your time and talent to any of the great local organizations on the Central Coast.

Mobile Veterans Center

The Veterans Center Community Outreach Vehicle is a state-of-the-art mobile veterans center. Assigned to the VA Capitola Veterans Center, the mobile veterans center will travel throughout Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties providing VA services to veterans where they live. The vehicle is equipped with full functioning office equipment, including hi-speed satellite communications technology for voice, internet, video conferencing and television and is capable of serving over 1,000 veterans per location visit. Moreover, in the event of a disaster, the mobile veterans center is also equipped to be modified into a mobile triage unit

Military Academy Nominations

Each year it is my privilege to nominate exceptional young men and women to our nation's service academies. The opportunity for a quality education and the honor of attending a service academy make these nominations highly competitive. I hope all motivated students living in California's 20th Congressional District will consider these fine opportunities for education and service to our country. Candidates to an academy must reside in California's 20th Congressional District, be a U.S. citizen, and never have been married. For more information, [click here](#).

Congressional Assistance

If you need assistance or clarification about VA policies, your health care or your compensation claim, please complete a [constituent privacy release form](#) or call either of my district offices to request assistance.

- Salinas 831-424-2229
- Santa Cruz 831-429-1976